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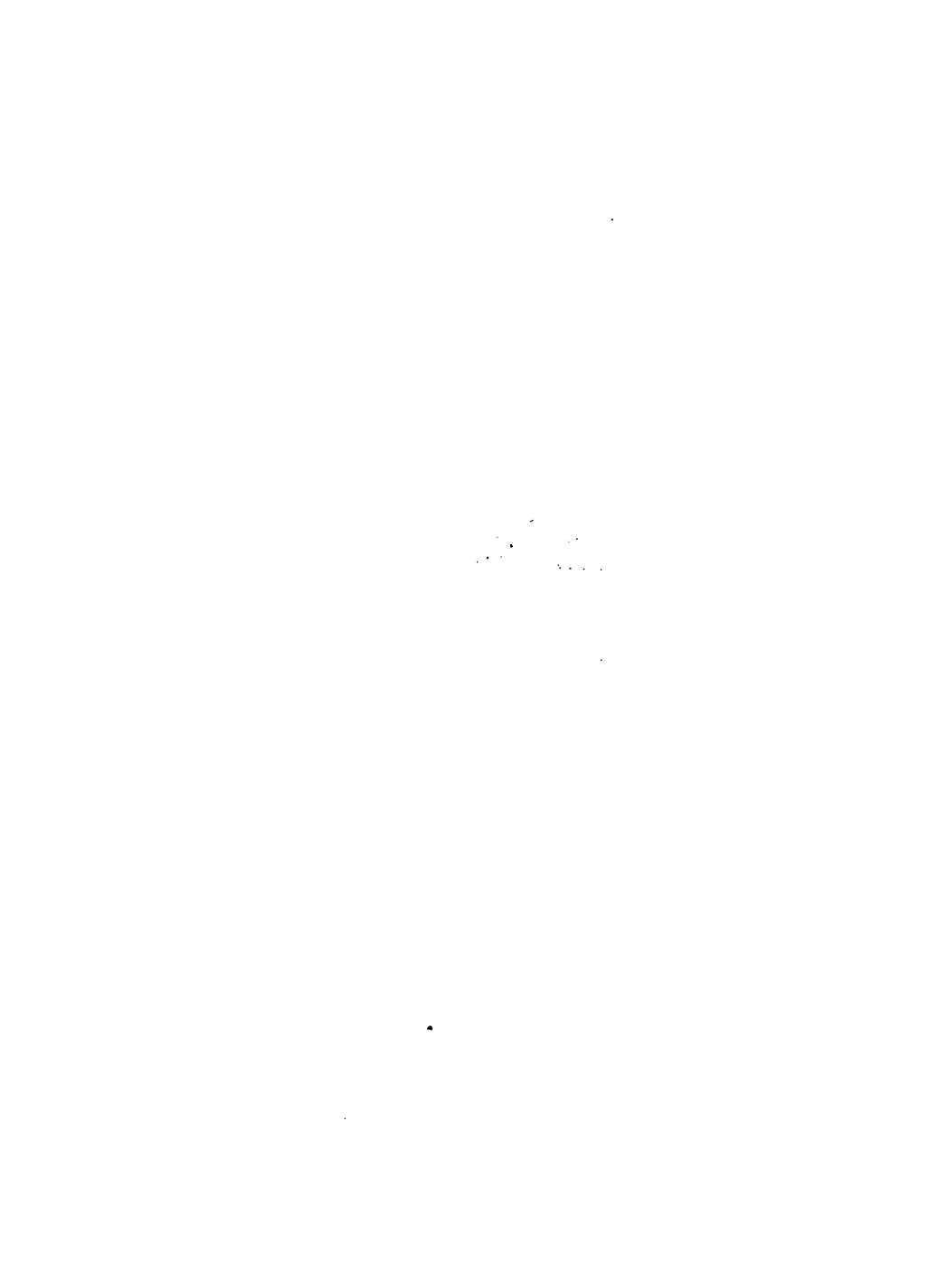
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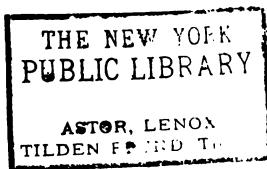




NEO
Hütten

Miss Carmichael's Conscience







— CHIPPEW GREEN —

“I TRIED TO TELL YOV THE OTHER
DAY AS SOON — AS I KNEW.”

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Miss Carmichael's Conscience

A STUDY IN FLUCTUATIONS

By

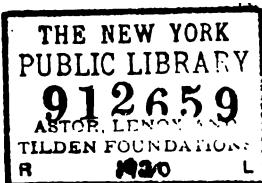
Baroness von Hutten



Philadelphia & London
J. B. Lippincott Company

1900
M 254

MISS CARMICHAEL'S
CONSCIENCE
BY
THE BARONESS VON HUTTEN
PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
1900



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Wacky Wacky
Collage
to a friend

TO

K. H. R.

WITH

LOVE



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Miss Carmichael's Conscience

CHAPTER I

Lady Sally Remonstrates

“**M**Y dear, Aunt Sally! Jim Copley is a lamb!” said Miss Carmichael.

“A lamb, if you like,” returned Lady Sally, grimly; “don’t you be a wolf, that’s all.”

“I am not a wolf. I am a shepherdess. Every lamb needs a shepherdess.”

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Lady Sally laughed in spite of herself, tossing another little packet of old postage-stamps into the box.

“Twenty-two thousand four hundred,” she said, and jotted down the number on a bit of paper.

When she had twenty-five thousand she was going to send them to a syndicate, and would receive the *Graphic* for a year.

The *Graphic* was to be given to the hospital. Of course, she could have taken half a dozen subscriptions to it without the slightest inconvenience, but she preferred the economy of the stamp system.

“Besides, Jim Copley has a shepherdess of his own,” she remarked, presently.

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Miss Carmichael, who was spread out in a low, cushiony basket-chair, doing nothing, yawned.

“Yes. But she is too young. I am years older than Jim Copley.”

“Nonsense; he is twenty-five.”

“So am I, minus three months,— and in real age! I was engaged to Methuselah, but he died.”

Lady Sally smiled sarcastically. “H’m! you may never have a husband, Mary. ‘He who will not when he may——’”

“‘Lives to fight another day,’” finished Miss Carmichael.

“But I don’t think I will be an old maid, Aunt Sally,” she continued, with a fine air of modest worth; “and if the worst came to the worst,

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there is always the curate to fall back on."

"The curate? Which curate?" asked her aunt, with suspicion. Mary always declared that Lady Sally's ears pricked up physically as other people's do mentally.

"Oh, *any* curate, you know," she answered.

"You are a vain wretch! But seriously, Mary, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for flirting with poor young Copley. It is outrageous."

Miss Carmichael regarded the tips of her shoes reflectively.

"I don't flirt with him, Aunt Sally," she answered, at length; "or if I do, he doesn't know it, which, of course,

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amounts to the same thing. And if it were not for my kind attentions, the poor boy would be bored to death while Eve is away."

"You have no conscience whatever, Mary Carmichael," exclaimed the elder lady, with an angry flush. "You never *did* have, even as a child. And now, I must say, I am ashamed of you."

Miss Carmichael smiled, but said nothing, and Lady Sally went on: "It is not nice, though it may be modern, and to my way of thinking it is vulgar, yes, *vulgar* of you."

Miss Carmichael sat up and bit her lip. "I admit every word of it except that," she said, slowly. "I am not vulgar, Aunt Sally."

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“It is even worse to be heartless and conscienceless,” persisted Lady Sally, picking up her scissors and rising; “but *that*, of course, you can’t understand.”

Mary shook her head. “No, I can’t. It is shocking to be heartless, of course. But much worse to be vulgar. And with all my faults you love me still. You know you do.”

She had a dimple under one eye which was very persuasive.

Lady Sally turned away to hide a relenting smile. “Moreover,” went on Miss Carmichael, “you can’t deny me one virtue. I am *resigned* to being a very bad lot, and—Resignation is a lovely quality!”

CHAPTER II

Showing the Fatal Effects of Opposition

SOME one once said, “One always watches for something queer to happen in Miss Carmichael’s eyes. Fire, or smoke, or something.”

And some one else said, “And when she sings she sounds like an angel, or a devil, or what is worse, like both.”

When young Mr. Copley came into the drawing-room, an hour after Lady Sally’s lecture, Miss Carmichael was singing like an angel. Her voice did have a queer, indescribable quality, though the man who de-

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scribed it above was in love with her, and therefore not to be trusted as a critic.

And this morning she chose to sing in a way which made Jim Copley think warmly, "Dear little Eve, God bless her!"

"Good-morning, Miss Carmichael," he called out, the warm feeling sounding in his cheery young voice. "What an awfully jolly song!" It was not a jolly song, and it had not made him feel jolly, but that word answered for many others with him.

"Yes, it is pretty. Spanish," answered the young lady, seating herself in a comfortable chair by the fire. "What news of Eve this morning?"

"Oh, good. The kids are all bet-

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ter, and the quarantine is to be raised in a few days."

"How nice! It must have been very dull for you of late."

"Oh, I'm never dull, and then you've been so awfully good to me," he answered, poking the fire with the toe of his boot.

Mary watched him. "Have I been good to you?" she said, reflectively.

"Yes, indeed, *awfully* kind," with vehemence. "And now you are going to show me those new chords on the guitar?"

"Not quite yet. I'm always lazy in the morning before I've done anything," she answered, leaning back against a silver-green Liberty cushion.

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“*Before* you've done anything?
Now you're guying me!”

“No, honor bright. I am shockingly lazy. Ask my aunt. I only like singing, and riding, and eating, and—flirting—a little.”

“Oh, I say,—but—no, never mind,” he stopped and turned rather red.

“But what?” she asked.

“Oh, nothing.”

“But I insist!”

“It was nothing. Only that Eve says you do really flirt sometimes.”

“That is mean of Eve. I never flirt with *her* men.”

“Eve's men? I didn't know,” began Copley, but she interrupted him,—

“You, for instance. Aren't you her man? And did I ever?” Her blue

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eyes looked dangerously smoky. He stared at her, surprised.

“With me? Of course not. I ain’t—I mean I ain’t amusing in the first place, and then I’m engaged, and it would be shabby.”

The smoke cleared away. “And you think me incapable of anything shabby?” she asked.

“Of course,” answered Jim Copley, simply.

If some evil genius had not brought Lady Sally into the drawing-room just then this tale had never been written.

But she did come, and after explaining that she was off to the village, on errands bent, and saying good-by, she took occasion to scowl warningly at her niece from behind the visitor’s

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chair. Whereupon Miss Carmichael's conscience, which had been slightly disturbed, curled itself up and went to sleep again.

“My dear Mr. Copley,” observed the young lady, as the door closed behind her well-meaning but misguided relative, “Eve is unkind to say I flirt. She is a very happy little girl of nineteen, and I—I am five-and-twenty and—an old maid.”

She took up her guitar and twanged softly at the E string.

“Oh, really now, Miss Carmichael,” protested Mr. Copley, showing his white teeth in an incredulous grin. “Isn’t that coming it rather strong?” But she did not smile.

“No. I don’t pretend to be un-

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happy, you know, at all ; but one thing has passed me by which you and Eve have found. The best thing of all."

There was a minute's silence, then : " You mean love," he said, reverently.

" Yes. And you happy people must not be too hard on us."

Somehow, he didn't quite like the implied separation, and he was, moreover, exceedingly uncomfortable.

As he could think of nothing to say he remained silent, beating his knee softly with one brown fist.

" I suppose I'm too old now," continued Miss Carmichael, in a pathetic minor voice, her beautiful eyes gazing absently past her audience, " but when I see Eve and you so radiantly

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happy, so wrapped up in each other, I can't help hoping——” She broke off again.

Mr. Copley's face burned, but he answered, honestly, “Oh, yes, we're all very well, Eve and I. She's the dearest little thing in the world, and I'm no end fond of her, but—poets and novel-writing Johnnies exaggerate awfully, Miss Carmichael. Real people don't feel as people in books do. You have rows, you know, and make up again, just as you would with your sister.”

Miss Carmichael bit her lip, and struck a clangling chord on her guitar.

“Yes, I dare say they do exaggerate,” she said, “and I am very ab-

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surd and sentimental this morning. We had Welsh rarebits last night, and I must have an indigestion." She rose, and laid the guitar on the piano. "And now, my dear Mr. Copley," she added, maternally, giving him her hand, "I must send you away, for I have just remembered the Indian mail, and poor Sophie Redwood must have a letter this time."

She smiled gayly as he took his leave, but as he crossed the lawn under the windows he heard her voice with a heart-break in it, and stopped to listen.

"I wish I wasn't such a thick-headed donkey," he muttered as the song ceased, and he went his way. "Then perhaps I'd understand."

CHAPTER III

Jim Copley takes Tea with Mrs. Rutherford

MRS. RUTHERFIELD'S drawing-room was, Mary Carmichael always declared, the most delightful in —shire.

Perhaps the wall-paper added to the charm, or even created it, for a quainter old paper never was seen. It was pale gray, in stripes of satin and dull finish, and the pattern was bird-cages and blue roses. Each cage contained a pale green or a pink bird (the cages were gilt), and the blue roses clambered about in a systematic

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luxuriance calculated to drive a gardener to despair. Time had faded the paper, as it had the old medallioned carpet, his kindly artist hand softening the colors so that no one was struck by any peculiarity of design.

“Little by little,” Miss Carmichael told some one, “the bird-cages soak into one’s inner consciousness and the blue roses become dear.”

But Miss Carmichael loved old Mrs. Rutherford as she loved no one else on earth, so she may have been prejudiced.

At five o’clock of the day on which Miss Carmichael had so pathetically bewailed her loveless state to Mr. Copley, that gentleman was sitting in

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this drawing-room, opposite Mrs. Rutherford and Mrs. Rutherford's tea-table, his dog Jarge by his side.

“I thought you wouldn't mind if I came in to tea,” he had explained. “Your tea is so good, and then,” he added, “it is so long since I saw you.”

“My dear lad,” answered the old lady, carefully pouring boiling water into the little brown earthenware pot in which she always made her tea, “I'm always verra glad to see you.”

And that is the only attempt I shall make at reproducing her strong Scottish accent. She made the tea, gave a cup to the young man, and added a little fluted plate of brown bread and butter to his store before either of them spoke again.

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“And what have you been about all this time, Jamie?” she asked.

Mr. Copley stirred his tea and reflected. “Precious little doing now,” he said.

The old lady laughed. “My brother Andra’ used to say he’d give a year of his life for a perfectly idle week. And I dare say you’d like something to do.”

She had been a crofter’s daughter, and the circumstances of her girlhood were well known to all her friends. “When she talks of old times,” said that enthusiast, Mary Carmichael, “all Scotch lassies are ‘Mary-at-thy-window-be’s’ and all Scotch laddies rustic Lochinvars.”

A picture of his sweetheart stood

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on a table near Mr. Copley. "Jolly picture of Eve," he said, munching his bread and butter.

"Poor child, how good she is, Jamie! Never a word of complaint, and she shut up all this time with those fretful children."

"She's a brick," he agreed, warmly. Eve's grandmother smiled and handed another photograph to him. "My Mary-girl."

He took it gingerly, mistrusting his fingers, which might be buttery. "She is a beauty," he said. Then he tried to find the wistful expression of that morning in the dark eyes. But they were laughing in the picture. He gave the photograph back to the old lady.

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“Do you think she is happy?” he asked.

“Mary? Bless the lad, of course she is! What more could she want? She is young and lovely and well——”

“I know,” he returned, a little embarrassed, “but still, I don’t understand her.”

“Of course you don’t!” The old lady laughed softly, and shook her head until the little curls danced. “She has puzzled many a wise head.”

“I’m sure you mean *wiser* heads, Mrs. Rutherford,” he answered, with a good-natured smile. “I confess she’s beyond me. When I’m with her I seem to feel a dozen different

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ways at once, though she is always awfully good to me."

Mrs. Rutherford glanced keenly at him. "That's her way, Jamie," she said. "And do you see much of her, then?"

"Oh, yes, pretty well every day of late. She's awfully good to me."

Mrs. Rutherford glanced at Eve's photograph, started to speak, and then said nothing.

"And when she sings, by Jove," went on the unconscious Copley, feeding a bit of cake to his dog, "it isn't just common or garden singing; it goes right through a fellow like—like the burial service or—a view-hul-loa."

"Deary me, what a burst of

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poetry!" laughed the old lady, as he rose.

He blushed. "Well, it does, though I can't ever explain things."

He smiled gayly down at her, his eyes full of fun. "Good-by. And don't tell Eve about my poetry; she might be jealous. They say it's an awfully bad sign."

CHAPTER IV

In which Satan finds Mischief for Idle Hands

MISS CARMICHAEL'S hands were very pretty ones, slim and white, with pointed fingers. That they were idle hands, however, a certain person evidently knew, for on the following afternoon he proceeded to find mischief for them. The day was dark and raw; and Miss Carmichael, thinking that she had nothing to do (not knowing of the arrangements of the certain person), decided to go to the church and play on the organ.

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So she borrowed the gardener's middle-sized son to "blow," and they set off briskly through the park. It had rained all day, and the wet leaves were dripping wearily off the trees.

"The whole world smells of new-dug graves," thought the young lady, cheerfully. "Dan, doesn't the world smell of new-dug graves?"

The middle-sized boy looked up at her imperturbably. "I don't know, Miss Mary," he said, "I never smelt 'un."

"You have an unsympathetic soul," observed Miss Mary; but Dan was silent, his knowledge of, and interest in, his own soul, being extremely limited.

The organ was good though old,

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and Miss Carmichael played well. It had grown dark and the music was still going on, when the door of the church opened, and Jim Copley and Jarge came in. Copley tiptoed into a pew and sat down, holding Jarge by the collar to insure gentlemanly behavior. Mary was playing Bach, which was beyond Mr. Copley and Jarge, but presently she drifted into the Largo, which they knew, as Eve Rutherford played it.

“It is different on the organ,” Jim thought. As she finished it he called out cheerily,—

“Bravo, Miss Carmichael! Don’t stop; we are enjoying it immensely.”

“Who are ‘we’?” she answered, without turning.

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“ Jarge and I.”

“ Then perhaps you and Jarge will come up and blow a little for me ? Dan wants his supper.”

Mr. Copley peeled off his wet mackintosh and proceeded to blow with all his might, as he always did everything.

Presently she stopped playing and lighted the organ candles.

“ Do you think it would be wicked to sing ‘ Carmen’ in church ? ” she asked, looking at him over her shoulder.

“ I don’t know. Perhaps—a little.”

“ Then I *will*. I feel extremely wicked to-day.” And she sang the Habanera, watching him with a mocking smile.

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“Is that true?” she asked on ceasing.

“Is what true? I don’t understand a word of French except when its printed.”

Miss Carmichael laughed wickedly. “Love. You know all about it,— tell me. Does it come when you don’t expect it or want it?”

He hesitated. “Are you serious?”

“Perfectly. The song says ‘Love is a bird that no one can tame. He won’t come when one calls, and when one doesn’t want him, there he is! Is that true? Does one fall in love like that?’”

He leaned against the organ and looked with a puzzled frown into her face.

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"I suppose you are teasing me," he answered, slowly. "Probably different people fall in love different ways."

"Of course, but *you*," she persisted, snuffing one of the candles with a hair-pin.

"I? No. I always loved Eve, and I was always glad of it."

"Always?" peering up at him in the flickering light. "Then it comes slowly?"

He didn't like the conversation, and felt very uncomfortable, but answered stoutly, "Yes, gradually."

"With me," she cried, "it will come never or with a rush, against my will, stronger than I like a great storm!"

She paused, and then added: "But

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you have it and I haven't, so here is a song for you. Don't forget it. It's a love-song, but Love is good, and it can't hurt the angels' feelings."

And she sang again. "I Love and the World is Mine." There was a sort of triumphant ring in the music which thrilled him through and through, and when she finished with a kind of victorious shout, he could not speak for the beating in his throat.

She rose and closed the organ. "It is six," she said. "I must be off. Don't forget that song, Mr. Copley," she added, laughing, as he helped her put on her jacket. "You can whistle it."

He didn't answer, and they left the church in silence and started across

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the park. It was raining hard, but he forgot to open her umbrella until she reminded him.

When they reached the house she asked, demurely, "Aren't you going to thank me for singing to you?"

"No," he burst out, "I'm not. I—I'd give anything if you hadn't sung like that; it has upset me *horribly*; I don't know——"

"Dear me!" answered Miss Carmichael, sweetly, and he knew by her voice that she raised her eyebrows, though it was too dark to see, "I'm so sorry. And many people like to hear me sing."

"Good-night," he blurted out.
"Come, Jarge."

CHAPTER V

*In which Miss Carmichael is told a Story
that she already knows*

AS Miss Carmichael took off her cloak that evening at Lady Yarrow's she counted the other wraps spread about the room. "Eight. Lady Yarrow and I make ten. There's Mrs. Wrenham's famous Spanish lace scarf which 'Brother Will' brought her, and Miss Purcell's overshoes, and, oh, dear ! Lady Bland's ermine ! The same stupid old lot."

With a sigh of anticipated boredom she retouched her smooth hair and descended to the drawing-room.

"You are late, Mary," said Lord

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Yarrow, with a beautiful old-fashioned bow, as she turned to him from his wife. "But like a late rose, my dear, most lovely." Then he introduced to her a strange man, who promptly offered her his arm.

She was distinctly glad that she had decided to wear her prettiest gown. Black is so becoming to good shoulders.

As old Lady Bland, puffing and blowing as fat old ladies sometimes do, sat down at the opposite side of the table, a funny thought occurred to Miss Carmichael, and she laughed.

Mr. Woodvil turned to her, his brown eyes twinkling.

"Ten to one I know what you are laughing at," he said.

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“Done!” answered Mary, as professionally as she knew how.

“Does it touch the old lady in the tropical cap?”

“Yes.”

“And Rudyard Kipling?”

“Yes.”

“And the Jungle Book?”

“You are a wizard!” she exclaimed, excitedly.

“And Fear?”

“Oh, you know, you know!”
She was flushed and dimpled, and Woodvil thought he had never seen such a charming face.

And she quite forgot that they met now for the first time.

“*Doesn't* the poor old thing ‘snuffle, snuffle, through the night?” she said.

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“It is Fear, little brother, it is Fear.”

Mary burst into a queer, little bubbling laugh which surprised herself. “No, it isn’t, it is *Hunger*,” she contradicted.

They both laughed, Woodvil’s eyes wrinkling up at the corners in a funny way she liked immensely.

“And if I had not guessed you wouldn’t have told me,” he said, turning all his wine-glasses upside down.

“Of course not. I am afraid of the dreadful fate of the children in the Bible and the prophet.”

“Poor soul,” he returned, laughing again, “do you think she is bald as well?” He had beautiful teeth, a little speck of gold in one of them.

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“Mary,” called Lord Yarrow at this point, “tell your aunt I have a new remedy for her asthma. It has just cured a friend of mine.”

Mary was startled; she had forgotten everything but Jacques Woodvil

“Oh, thank you!” she answered hastily, gathering her wits together “If this cure is as good as all you *other ones*—” she added, slyly.

“You are a disrespectful young monkey,” answered the old man with a gay laugh.

“Banderlog,” murmured Mary, but the spell was broken. Mr. Frederick Bland began to talk to her, and she did her best to pay attention to him while Woodvil’s laugh sounded in her other ear.

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“How nice of him to try to amuse Amelia Purcell!” she thought.

But Frederick Bland prosed on, as do the Frederick Blands of this world, and she disguised her ennui so well that he was enchanted, and believed that he had made an impression.

After dinner Mr. Woodvil came at once to Mary and sat down by her.

“You deserted me,” he said; “it was base of you.”

He was unlike every one she had ever known.

“I was learning all about American agricultural inventions,” she answered, demurely. “What could you have taught me?”

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“Nothing up to that. I might tell you how to tunnel a mountain.”

She noticed that his well-shaped hands were unusually brown, and that one of them had a broad scar. “You are a civil engineer?” she asked, “and have you been tunnelling things near here?”

“Not nearer than Brazil.”

“Ah, where the nuts come from!”

He looked puzzled. “The nuts?”

And she hastened to add, feeling as if she had hurt him, “Of course, you don’t know Charley’s aunt.” Then Lady Yarrow asked her to sing.

To Miss Carmichael was always accorded the very un-English compliment of attention when she sang. In utter silence she finished her song,

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and then, obeying an imploring look from her old friend and host, sang Franz's "The Butterfly fell in Love with the Rose."

When she rose, Miss Purcell hungrily took her place, and Liszt and conversation began.

Mary was hardly seated before Woodvil, with the straightforwardness which seemed to characterize him, again joined her.

"How strange that you should sing that song!" he began abruptly.

"Why?" she asked, looking past him as indifferently as possible.

"Because it is very sadly familiar to me, though I never heard it sung before."

Mary looked at him in question,

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and saw that all the fun had left his dark eyes.

“It was down there, in Brazil,” he resumed, after a minute’s silence. “A man I knew there used to whistle that song. We were together nearly two years. I did my best to keep him from going to the devil, and failed. He drank.”

Mary looked at him in dumb sympathy.

“But I was awfully fond of him, poor Boone,” went on Woodvil, clearing his throat. “It was horribly sad. Women do more mischief than they know, I hope.” Then, “You see, men grow intimate off there, so far away, and tell each other things. And he was lonely, too;

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hadn't even her picture, nothing but that song she used to sing and a bow from her shoe that he picked up at a ball."

"Had she, the girl, jilted him?" asked Miss Carmichael, breathlessly, fanning herself.

"Oh, no. She had only flirted with him, led him on and then—refused him,—very much surprised, and all that. He never said a word against her, or even told me her name. He always insisted she was an angel."

"Did—other people say she wasn't?"

"Yes. I tried to convince him that she wasn't worth it, but——"

She laughed, a hard little laugh.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“Women are often blamed too much in such things,” she said.

“I hope so. What are the words of the song, Miss Carmichael?” She repeated them in English.

“Poor old Boone! There wasn’t much of the butterfly about him, but that seems to have been his *rôle*.”

“That is an extraordinary name,” commented Mary, rising.

“Oh, it was only a nickname. His real name was Mackenzie.”

She put her fan to her lips for a minute, and then said, “It was very sad, Mr. Woodvil, but I fear your friend must have been rather weak in the first place.”

He looked surprised. “Of course he was. But that was no reason for

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

ruining him. He should have been all the more carefully treated."

"I am going now," said Mary. "Good-night." She looked tired.

"Good-night, Miss Carmichael. May I come to see your aunt and you? I shall be here a week." He looked eagerly at her, and she gave him her hand. "Might I come the day after to-morrow? I have an engagement to-morrow. And forgive me for boring you with a sad story."

"Come by all means," she answered. "My aunt will be very glad and so shall I. Good-night. You have not bored me, Mr. Woodvil."

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Copley enjoys a Moonlight Cigar

MMR. COPLEY, after his solitary dinner that same evening, felt that a cigar would do him good. So he chose one, and went to the drawing-room to smoke it, as lone bachelors will.

“I made a precious ass of myself this afternoon,” he observed, as he poked the fire. “I wonder what on earth made me?”

He arranged his feet comfortably on a yellow satin chair, and continued his mental conversation.

“What a blessed idiot she must

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

think me ! Though it isn't likely she thinks of me at all. She's much too clever to bother her head about the likes of me."

He nipped the cigar firmly with his teeth and grinned good-naturedly. "Eve doesn't exactly like her, it seems," pulling that day's letter out of his pocket.

"Let's see,—'With whom is Mary Carmichael flirting now ?' That's where you're wrong, Miss Eve ; there isn't the ghost of a man about, except me. 'It is a pity she flirts,' continued the letter, 'she is so beautiful and so clever, but I wish she were a little *kinder*. It is witty, of course, the way she talks, but it seems to me a little cruel.'

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“There never was a kinder girl,” corrected the discriminating Mr. Copley, putting the letter away.

“I must go to-morrow and beg her pardon. Now I'll have another cigar in the garden. Poetry, by Jove!”

It had cleared, and the chilly November moon was doing its best to shine as it did in June,—in the nights of its youth.

Mr. Copley marched twice around the garden, and then decided to go down the road a bit and have a look at things. As he plodded along through the mud, his hands buried comfortably in his pockets, he found himself whistling.

“That song! My song, eh? ‘I Love and the World is Mine.’ She

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told me to whistle it, and here I am piping away at it like mad. She said it was my song. On Eve's account, I suppose." He whistled a few bars and then lost the melody. "How she did sing it, too! It made me shiver like a cold dip." He passed the gates of Melton House, Mrs. Rutherford's place, without knowing it, so engrossed was he in meditation.

"I wonder why she asked me all those funny questions. To tease me, I suppose. What was it she said about loving? Like a great storm." He laughed cheerfully and jumped over a mud-puddle.

"Eve and I are more like a nice summer day than a storm! She's a queer one. I can't imagine her in

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love. She isn't a little bit like Eve."

He had reached the gates of Wincott, and decided to return home through the park. He tramped up the short avenue, crossed the lawn, and stopped before the moonlit house.

"It *does* look like a cheerful mausoleum," he thought. "What funny things she says!" The song still rang in his ears, and he wondered why. Suddenly he knew. Some one opened an up-stairs window. It was only a housemaid, but before he had time to realize this, he knew.

Big fellow as he was, poor Jim Copley pressed both his hands to his breast as if hurt.

"Oh, my God! my God!" he said.

CHAPTER VII

*In which Mrs. Rutherford receives some
Visits*

THE morning after the dinner Miss Carmichael awoke in a mood of unnatural goodness. She felt interested in all the world, and, slipping on a dressing-gown, crossed the hall to see the nearest specimen of humanity, her aunt, who had had one of her sudden asthmatic attacks the evening before. Lady Sally was sitting up in bed, draped in an old red shawl, eating her breakfast.

“How do you feel this morning, Aunt Sally?” inquired Miss Car-

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michael, affectionately, as she curled up on the bed to keep her feet warm.

“I think a little better, but that goose of a man doesn’t know one thing about asthma.”

“Lord Yarrow has another sure cure for you.”

“Hm! how was the dinner?”

“Good. A most delicious iced pudding. I wished you were there to eat some of it.”

“Why do you look so happy, Mary?” inquired Lady Sally, suspiciously. “You actually beam!”

Miss Carmichael blushed. “I don’t know, Aunt Sally; I feel well, I’m glad you’re better——”

Lady Sally laughed knowingly.
“Who were there?”

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“The same old lot,—the Blands, the Purcells, etc.”

Miss Carmichael rose and went to the window. “It is awfully cold this morning,” she said, “the paths are frozen.”

“No strangers?” persisted her aunt, inexorably.

“No. That is, only one. A Mr. Woodley, or Woodvil. A friend of Barry’s, I imagine.”

Lady Sally laughed again. “Aha! Nice?”

“Very agreeable. Now I must go and dress. Good-by.” Without turning again to the bed, she left the room, and when she had locked her own door she went to the dressing-table and looked at herself in the

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

glass. "Mary Middleton Carmichael," she said, "you are a goose."

She gave her maid a much coveted gown that morning and fed the birds from the dining-room window. She practised scales, which she loathed, for two hours, made out the soup-kitchen accounts, and after luncheon went up again to see her aunt.

Lady Sally was coughing badly and felt worse. "Tell Graves to say I'm ill if any one should call," she said. "Oh, dear! I'm sure I'll be in bed a week. That man is a donkey."

"Oh, no, Aunt Sally," protested Mary, cheerfully, "you'll be better to-morrow." She started to add that Mr. Woodvil was to call the next day, but changed her mind.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“What are you going to do this afternoon?” went on Lady Sally, punching her pillow spitefully. “If you go out can’t you take those flannels over to Mrs. Rutherford?”

Miss Carmichael laughed. “Of course I can, you poor wheezy lady. I’ll enjoy the walk.” Anything was welcome to her as a means of passing the day.

She called Lady Sally’s maid and then went out into the damp afternoon.

Mrs. Rutherford sat by the window sewing when she entered.

“Oh, what a good lassie to come to me to-day!” cried the old lady, rising. “And what a lovely face you bring for me to look at!”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Miss Carmichael smiled. She knew her face was lovely and saw no reason for protesting.

“Better still, I have brought you six beauteous red flannel petticoats on which to sew. And the color comes off on one's hands, but refuses utterly to come off *from* one's hands!” She sat down and undid her parcel. “There!” she exclaimed, rapturously.

Mrs. Rutherford crossed the room to a table and came back with a big, straw work-basket. “There's a thimble, dear. Now we will sew and chatter at the same time. It will be very cosy.”

Mary felt kindly disposed towards the world that afternoon, even towards the lowly and ill-smelling. She there-

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

fore accepted the thimble and rummaged in the basket for thread and a needle. The fire crackled pleasantly; she loved Mrs. Rutherford; she was very happy.

“*Are* we going to have scones for tea,” she exclaimed at length, stopping to thread her needle, “or does my nose belie me?”

“Your nose tells you the truth. I believe Jane knows by intuition when Miss Mary is here. Eve doesn’t like them, you know.”

Mary laughed. “I know. Eve likes Albert biscuits; she actually *likes* them! They are so unsympathetic. When is Eve coming, Mrs. Rutherford?”

“To-morrow night. I am glad.

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Poor child, she has had a dismal time."

"No one but Eve would have stayed," answered Mary. "She is so awfully good. I admire Eve."

"She is a dear child."

"When are they to be married?"

"In the spring some time, I think. Jamie tells me he has seen you several times lately, Mary. What do you think of him?" Mrs. Rutherford's kind, clever eyes rested on the girl's face as she spoke.

"Oh, I like him *very* much. He seems to me to be a thoroughly 'good sort,' as he'd say himself. I think they will be a most attractive little pair." It was perfectly true.

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At that minute the two seemed to her very charming.

She looked happily around the dusky room. The firelight danced on the wall, and the girl smiled as she looked at the bird-cages. "I do so love to come here," she said in a soft voice. "You are such a *calming* dear. Ah, the tea. Just look at those scones!"

The servant arranged the tea-table, lighted the lamps, and left the room.

"I dined with the Yarrows last night," began Miss Carmichael, taking her cup; and just then the door opened, and in trotted Lord Yarrow himself, followed by Woodvil. Mary drew back out of the lamplight and watched the introduction.

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It seemed that Mrs. Rutherford had known Woodvil's grandfather and father years ago, before Woodvil himself was born.

“So I promised to bring him over,” wound up Lord Yarrow, “and here we are. Bless my soul, is that you, Mary?”

Woodvil turned quickly, his brown face breaking into a pleased smile as they shook hands.

“Now, then, Mary, you come and sit with me, while those two old people talk over old times. Scones? Of course I do.”

Mary obeyed, bringing her cup to a chair near the old man's. She chatted merrily with him, watching the other two meantime. She was per-

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

fectly happy. Woodvil's profile was turned to her, cut clear against the fire. From time to time he spoke, and then she let Lord Yarrow talk on to her, but she did not listen.

Mrs. Rutherford was telling Woodvil stories of his grandfather. "Ah, but he did paint!" she said. "He came up to Scotland with your father, a wee laddie,—your grandmother was long dead, you know. And they lodged with us. My father was a poor crofter, and as our scenery was very beautiful, we often had artists with us. Later came my dear husband, a friend of your grandfather." She broke off, and stared absently into the fire for a minute.

Woodvil turned away, and met

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Mary's eyes. She turned quickly to Lord Yarrow.

Mrs. Rutherford took up the tea-pot and peered into it. "I am a very old woman," she said, simply, letting the tears stand on her brown cheeks.

Woodvil leaned over and, taking her left hand, kissed it respectfully.

Mary smiled to herself. "He must have learned that in Brazil," she thought.

After a short time Lord Yarrow rose and went out to examine one of Mrs. Rutherford's horses that was ill, and Mary could lean back silently in her chair and listen to the others.

Woodvil had a strange foreign look, in spite of his English clothes. His close-cropped dark hair was curly,

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too, she noticed. Curly hair in a man always appeals to a woman's maternal instinct, be she never so young.

"I wonder how old he is," she thought. Then she laughed under her breath. "What an awful goose I am!"

"And who was your mother?" asked Mrs. Rutherford.

"My mother was French. The daughter of my father's fencing-master, Count d'Auvray. She died when I was only ten. I remember her, though," he added. "My father died fifteen years ago. They were very fond of each other; my father was never quite the same after her death."

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“It was the same with your grandfather. Well, my dear lad,” added the old lady, as Lord Yarrow entered and Woodvil rose, “thank you very much for coming to see me, and I hope you may have a happier life than your grandfather and your father.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Rutherford.” He kissed her hand again and turned to Mary.

By the light of the lamp his face looked older and more serious than in the firelight, she thought.

“Good-by, Miss Carmichael,” he said. “I hope you have not forgotten that you said I might call on your aunt and you to-morrow?”

“We shall be very glad to see you,” she answered, politely.

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“Mary dear,” said Mrs. Rutherford, as the door closed, “do you not see how like he is to poor Borrowdaile?”

“Mr. Woodvil? Like Lord Borrowdaile? No!”

“But he is, Mary. As like as a splendidly well man can be to one who suffers continual pain. They have the same beautiful heads and the same true eyes. I often wonder, dear, if there is no hope for Archie Borrowdaile?”

Miss Carmichael frowned as she fastened her jacket. “No, if you mean *that*, Mrs. Rutherford. I like him very much, but I don’t—care for him. And he is a cripple.”

The old lady watched her wistfully. “You could make his life so beauti-

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

ful, dearie. And he loves you with all his big, gentle heart."

"*Don't*," cried the girl, impatiently, "don't make me think of him. If he were not lame I shouldn't mind, but—poor fellow—"

She kissed her old friend tenderly. "I have been so happy this afternoon with you, I don't want to go away thinking of sad things."

"No, my Mary. Be happy. That is all I want, you know. I only wish you could love him, that is all."

Mary blushed. "Good-by," she said. "You forget that I am going to be an old maid."

CHAPTER VIII

“When Blood is Nipt and Ways be Foul”

LADY SALLY was better the next morning, but when Miss Carmichael went up to see her after luncheon, intending to tell her casually that Mr. Woodvil was coming to call, she was greeted with groans.

“I’m *much* worse. I can’t breathe at all; just listen to me. I should think that owl might learn something about asthma when I’m such a sufferer. Give me another cigarette.”

Miss Carmichael obeyed mechanically, and in a minute the room was

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

full of the queer acrid odor of medicated tobacco.

“Tell Graves, will you? Some one might come.”

Nothing would have been easier than for the girl to say that she, at least, was at home and would see any chance visitor. Or she might have mentioned Woodvil specifically. But she could not speak, and after a minute left her aunt. She went into her own room and sat down on the bed. “It is *beastly, beastly*,” she said, with clinched hands.

Suddenly an idea struck her, and she put on her jacket and hat.

“Yes, I *will*. It is forward, but I don’t care. I *will* see him. He amuses me,” she added, in self-excuse.

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She left the house and took the road leading to the village—and to the Towers. She walked very slowly, so slowly that she was cold. But the village was reached without her meeting any one, and she turned back.

“They'll think I forgot my purse or something,” she thought.

She turned in at the home gates and wandered about on the frozen grass.

“Four o'clock. I'll count a thousand and then I'll go.” She began to count, but at three hundred and seventy she burst out laughing. “It is too absurd. I'll go now, and *really*.”

Just at the outskirts of the village he came. Mary smiled politely and stopped, wondering if he could pos-

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

sibly see that she had been looking for him.

“How very unkind of you to come out when you had said I might call!” he said, taking off his thick glove and shaking hands with her.

“My aunt is ill, unfortunately, and cannot receive,” she answered. “I am very sorry.”

“Then may I go with you?” And he turned.

“Oh, yes.” She couldn’t keep a little happy break out of her voice. “I am going to a cottage on an errand, and then to buy some embroidery-silks. Isn’t it a horrid day?” She nestled her head cosily into her furs as she spoke.

“What’s the odds as long as

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

you're 'appy?" he answered, and they both laughed.

They laughed a great deal over very little things. He waited outside the cottage for her, and then helped her choose her silks, greatly to the admiration of Mrs. Hand, who served them herself.

When they left the shop, he asked, "Can't you take me for a walk, Miss Carmichael? If you cast me off I am lost for the rest of the afternoon, and you are responsible for my not having gone to Willton with Lord Yarrow and Barry."

Mary forgot to hesitate. "We can go to the Valley Church; the view is lovely. There is a ruin; Druid or Norman, I forget which."

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

They struck across the fields, following a little path which crawled gradually up a hill.

“English scenery must be rather tame after Brazil,” remarked Miss Carmichael at length.

“England tame? Never. It’s home, you know. Brazil is big and gaudy and England little and—cosy. Oh, I have been homesick sometimes!”

She wondered how old he was. He looked a little older by daylight, and there were a few gray hairs about his temples. But youth shone in his brilliant eyes, and he laughed like a boy of twenty.

“I have been homesick, too. In Paris, at school. It is a hideous sentiment.”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

He laughed. "Girls at school are always homesick, aren't they?"

"No, not always; but at Christmas, and then one's birthday."

"My last birthday a fellow stabbed me. A Mexican. He stabbed me in the back, of course. Those 'Greasers' always do."

Mary shivered. "Was it very bad?" she asked. "Were you very ill?"

"No, not very. Only rather weak from loss of blood."

She shuddered again.

"And you are going back to such a dreadful place?"

"Oh, yes. It's my life, you see. I've been there twelve years, off and on."

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“He must be at least thirty-two,” she thought.

They had reached the top of the hill and the old church was before them.

“It is called the Valley Church because the *view* is of the valley. Not because it is on a hill,” explained Miss Carmichael.

They walked around to the south side of the ruin and passed into the church-yard.

“There!” she said.

He leaned his arms on the stone wall and looked up the wintry valley.

Suddenly he turned. “Young Copley is a good fellow, isn’t he?” he asked.

She was startled and somewhat annoyed. “Yes. Why?”

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“He came over this morning to ask me to take out a *protégé* of his. Perkins.”

“Oh!” answered Mary, vaguely. She was not in the least interested in Jim Copley.

Woodvil looked at her. “He is awfully in love with you,” he said, slowly.

“With me?” she echoed.

“Yes, with you.”

Then she remembered Eve and found her voice. “You evidently don’t know, Mr. Woodvil, that Mr. Copley is engaged to Eve Rutherford.”

He was quite unmoved. “Yes, I do, and that makes no difference. The man is in love with you.”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Miss Carmichael held her head well up. "And if he were," she began, "I really am at a loss to see——"

"What business it is of mine? Well, I'll tell you. None, of course. But I saw a look in that boy's eyes which reminded me of Boone MacKenzie, and—I thought I'd tell you."

"And now that you have told me, I think we had better go down," she answered, coldly. "It is getting late."

"Just as you like." He bowed, and followed her in silence. As they reached the village he said, "If you are angry I am sorrier than you can ever know, Miss Carmichael." She shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"I am not angry," she returned,

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with an indifferent laugh. "I have never been in Brazil, you know——"

"I understand. You mean you are not used to Brazilian manners. I am awfully sorry. I never in my life wanted a woman's friendship as I wanted yours."

She did not answer, and they reached the Wincott gates in silence.

She stopped. "I will tell my aunt that you called," she said.

"You will not forgive me?"

"Certainly. I don't suppose you meant to be rude, and it is of no consequence whatever."

He looked straight into her eyes.

"I wonder if you know how that hurts?" he said.

CHAPTER IX

*Mr. Graves Points a Moral and
Adorns a Tale*

“DO’EE now, Mr. Graves, just
a leetle hair more! You
was always a gentleman fond of pork-
chops.”

Mr. Graves allowed his scruples to
be overcome, and even accepted a
third cup of coffee.

The clock struck eight. “You
found that letter outside her door, my
dear, did you?”

Mr. Graves wiped his mouth grace-
fully on his shirt-sleeve.

“Yes, Mr. Graves. It’s to go at

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once," answered Jane, the upstairs maid.

"At once when I'm ready," added Sam, the groom, officially known as Riggs, who was eating ham and eggs with his knife, to the admiration of the kitchen-maid.

"Right you are, Samuel," said the cook. "Plenty of time. Miss Mary's a young lady as keeps her place in the morning, and she won't be down for an hour or more."

Mr. Graves took up the letter and held it at arm's length.

"Jack-wees Woodvil, *Es-quire*," he read aloud. "That's a new one. She's a caution." Mr. Graves in the relaxation of his unofficial moments would have astonished his mistress.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

He helped himself to strawberry jam and then turned to Jane and Burrows, Miss Carmichael's maid. "Take warning, my dears," he said, paternally, "and don't you go a-carryin' on like the young missis. I've a-been in this 'ouse eleven years, and the goin's on is beyond belief.

"First there was the vicar's young gentlemen,—all of 'em, when she was sixteen. Then young Worsley, an ensign in the guards *he* was, as come down to visit his mamma. Then there was two curates; one of 'em had the 'ay-fever and the other went down on his knees,—I 'appened in with the tea."

"Lor'!" exclaimed Jane, with an excited giggle.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“There was two military gents after that, and young 'Arford.

“And little Cranby, 'e tried to kill 'imself. And then there was a Mr. MacKenzie who visited here. You remember, Cook, him as ate so many muffins. He disappeared.”

“She 'ave a cold heart,” murmured Burrows, who was romantic, and wore a fringe on Sundays.

Sam sopped up the remains of his eggs with a bit of bread and ate it. Then he rose. “But she's a dysy, just the same,” he remarked, watching the effect of his speech on the kitchen-maid. “She 'ave an *uncle*!”

Mr. Graves frowned. “Be off with you, Sam,” he said; “you're a young man, and it don't befit you to talk so.”

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Sam put the letter in his pocket, slapped it, kissed his hand to the ladies, and withdrew.

Mr. Graves put on his coat, and sent the footman, who was greedy, and never talked at his meals, for the newspapers.

“But what I wanted to tell you,” he said, pointing his finger impressively at the two young women, “was this here. *She's not married yet!* She'll be five-and-twenty on the eleventh of February, and she ain't a-growin' no younger. She's thinner than she used to be, and—time flies.”

Just then Miss Carmichael's bell rang sharply, and Burrows rose leisurely, wiping her hands on the table-cloth.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“ Well, there she goes, a-ringing as if the house was on fire. I must be off.”

CHAPTER X

*In which Miss Carmichael's Conscience
begins to make itself felt*

WHEN Miss Carmichael came down to breakfast at nine that morning, she found two letters at her place.

“The Penny Annual, Aunt Sally,” she remarked, as she poured out her coffee.

Lady Sally ate Hovis and drank tea, but her niece’s digestion was as convenient as her conscience, and supported a good deal without protest, so she drank coffee and ate hot rolls.

“Well, Mary, you are twenty-four,”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

answered the invalid, who was still embellished with the red shawl.

Miss Carmichael laughed. There was such a ring in her voice that Lady Sally looked at her sharply. "You look very pretty this morning, Mary," she said.

"Don't I always?"

"No. What does he say?"

"Who?" helping herself to marmalade. "Oh, the Penny Annual? Just what he says always. You can't expect the poor man to be brilliantly original the fourth time."

"How can you eat that sweet stuff! Harford is a beautiful place, and he's very nice. If I were twenty-five years younger——"

"If you were twenty-five years

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

younger, Aunt Sally, he would be exactly six. Besides, he's bow-legged, so I'm keeping him for that 'crooked stick' you are always talking about."

Lady Sally grunted. "Did Graves tell you that that goose was here yesterday afternoon?"

"What goose? Dr. Boyce?"

"No. Young Copley."

Miss Carmichael colored. "Oh, was he?" she asked, weakly. "If—he should come to-day,—I am—out," she added, stirring her coffee with vehemence.

"Aha! Now that Eve has come you are going to reform!"

"No, I'm not, but—he is so awfully fond of music, you know. You

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

always say I have no conscience, but——”

“When you begin to talk about your conscience, Mary Carmichael, I withdraw. I don't believe in miracles.” Lady Sally rose, and, taking the papers which Mr. Graves had carefully refolded, she left the room.

“I wonder if the prodigal son's uncles and aunts turned up their noses at his poor old credulous father,” thought Miss Carmichael.

She sewed all the morning on a horrible, sticky red flannel petticoat, listening for a ring at the door.

“He must answer, even if he is disgusted,” she thought, but no note came.

After luncheon her aunt asked her

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

to go to Mrs. Hand's and buy her some wool.

“I am going to Mrs. Rutherford's,” she answered, “and I'll have Johnny Hand bring it to you. When I come home there will *surely* be a note,” she thought.

While she was searching for the particularly unsympathetic shade of gray which Lady Sally always chose for her “poor work,” Lord and Lady Yarrow, followed by Woodvil, came into the shop.

After a few words they went into the back room with Mrs. Hand, and Woodvil came to Mary again.

“I was going to leave a note for you, Miss Carmichael,” he said. “But now——”

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She laughed nervously. "Oh, give me the note,—I adore notes, and—
they're coming."

He looked seriously at her. "Have you really forgiven me?" he asked.

"I had nothing to forgive," she answered.

"And—it was magnificent of you to tell me that," he went on.

Her breath caught in her throat. "I—I wanted you to know the worst of me." Then, suddenly, fearing she had gone too far, "I always have that feeling. I *must* tell things to people I like."

With a fine air of frank bonhomie, she looked straight into his face.

"Ah!" he started to speak, but bit his lip and laid an envelope on the

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

counter by her. "May I come and see you to-morrow?" he asked, hurriedly, as Lord and Lady Yarrow approached.

"Yes," she answered, simply.

She read the note in the Melton House grounds, sitting on a belated rustic bench.

"DEAR MISS CARMICHAEL,—May I take your note as a sign of forgiveness? As I told you yesterday, I want your friendship more than I have ever wanted the friendship of a woman. As to poor Boone, I am sorry it was you, but I see now that I greatly exaggerated the matter, and I understand him better.

"Thank you for telling me. It

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does a man good to know a woman like you. I will come to see you to-morrow unless you forbid me.

“Yours sincerely,

“JACQUES WOODVIL.”

She read it through twice, and then blushing at her sentimentality, tucked it in her bosom, and went on to the house, singing happily to herself.

CHAPTER XI

*Miss Carmichael's Conscience continues
to Prick*

“**E**VE Rutherford’s hair doesn’t match her face,” Miss Carmichael once said to young Mr. Featherly, the curate.

“Her hair is Magdalenish, and her face like a nice plump little Madonna.”

She enjoyed shocking the curate, a good young man, whose chief feature was his Adam’s apple, but she was right about Eve Rutherford.

Eve was plump and pink and sweet, a kind little soul who loved

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“pets,” went to church on week-days, and enjoyed Miss Yonge.

Her eyes had full lids, like a Raphael, and she brushed her beautiful red hair into a net, but could not control the soft little frizz on her forehead and neck.

When Miss Carmichael entered that afternoon, Eve was sitting at a little table, cutting the figures out of colored picture-cards.

“How do you do, Mary?” she said, sedately, holding up her fresh cheek.

Mary took off her jacket and sat down. “What on earth are you doing, Eve?”

“I’m going to stick them on a screen for the children’s ward.”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“H’m! I sewed myself nearly blind on a nasty flannel petticoat this morning, but I’m sure we could *buy* such things both better and cheaper.”

Eve laughed and shook her head. “You sewing on a flannel petticoat, Mary? I can’t imagine it.”

“A penance for my sins. Now tell me, when did you get home?”

“Last night at nine.”

“How is your grandmother?”

“Well, she will be coming down soon.”

Eve put away her things, and just as she finished Mrs. Rutherford entered. The old lady kissed Mary, and Eve went upstairs to wash her hands. She left her rings on the

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table, and Mary amused herself by trying them on.

“It’s a very good diamond,” she said, as the man brought the tea ; she held up her hand and looked at it with critical eyes.

“Yes, it’s a good one,” answered the old lady, absently.

When the servant left the room she said, suddenly, “Mary, what is the matter with Jamie?”

Mary started, and dropped one of the rings. “Jamie,—Mr. Copley? I don’t know. Is he ill?”

The old lady rose and came to her. “My Mary,” she said, seriously, one hand on each of the girl’s shoulders, “is it your fault?”

“Won’t you explain?”

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“Yes. He came this morning to see Eve. I don’t think she noticed, but I did. Mary, he is unhappy. Is it your fault?”

Miss Carmichael was about to be offended and deny things, when a movement caused something to prick into her chest.

It was Woodvil’s letter.

“I—oh, Mrs. Rutherford,” she said, “I am afraid it is.”

The old lady went slowly back to her place, and fluttered her little brown hands vacantly over the tea things.

“Oh, Mary!”

Miss Carmichael knelt by her and took the little upright form in her arms.

“I am *so* sorry,” she said, “and I

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didn't mean to. That is, not *quite*. You know how I go on,—from bad to worse!"

Her eyes were full of tears. "I am a *pig*!"

Mrs. Rutherford petted her hair absently. "They would have been very happy, I think," she said. "Oh, Mary!"

"They shall be yet," answered the girl, rising. "It is all nonsense, and will turn out all right. It *shall*. Hush!"

Eve came in with two cats cuddled up in her arms. "Aren't they ducks, Mary?"

"I don't like cats, but they look —clean!"

"Jim gave them to me on my

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birthday. Each one had a bracelet around its neck."

While they were drinking tea Jim came in, and Miss Carmichael was shocked to see the change in his fresh young face.

"You look seedy, Jim," remarked his *fiancée*, as she gave him his tea.

He pushed his chair back out of the firelight. "Beastly headache. I'll be all right after a cup of tea."

Every time Miss Carmichael moved she felt the letter. "I never knew consciences were made of paper," she thought.

Eve talked on cheerfully, and Mary did her best, but it was a doleful party.

At last Miss Carmichael rose. "I

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must begin to plod my weary way," she said.

"Good-by, dear Mrs. Rutherford, good-by, Eve, good-by, Mr. Copley."

"It is dark," he answered. "I will walk to your gates with you."

Mary protested, but vainly, Eve taking his side, and in a few minutes the two were walking down the avenue.

"I called on you yesterday," he said, suddenly. "I wanted to apologize to you for the other evening."

"The other evening?" She couldn't recall what he meant.

"Yes. About your singing. I'm awfully sorry."

"Oh, it was nothing. I had quite forgotten."

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They went on in silence for a few minutes, then he said, "You have been very kind to me. I must thank you."

She moved sharply, and the letter hurt her again. "Oh," she exclaimed. "I—"

They stopped in the light of the lodge windows.

Her heart was too full of gladness not to feel the misery in his eyes. "I—am so sorry," she cried, impulsively, holding out her hands. "Will you forgive me, Jim?"

She had never called him Jim before.

He seized both her hands fiercely, then let them drop, and drew himself up.

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“I'm all right, Miss Carmichael,” he said. “There's nothing the matter.”

Loyalty pulled him one way, honesty the other. “That is, nothing that I can't overcome.” He raised his hat. “Good-night, Miss Carmichael.”

She stood looking after him.

“What a beast I am!” she said aloud.

CHAPTER XII

Lady Sally is Inopportune

IT was four o'clock, and Miss Carmichael was in the drawing-room, arranging the stage-setting, so to speak, for the afternoon's performance.

She put an open book on the sofa, Browning's *Short Poems*, opened at "The Last Ride Together."

A piece of embroidery lay on a little table by the fire. She had begun it four years ago, but embroidery, like emotions, lasts long when not much used.

The room was full of flowers, the

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tea-table ready for modest conviviality. Miss Carmichael herself was also in full stage dress. She had an unerring sense of the fitness of things, and had decided that, everything considered, a simple gray gown with a fichu of old lace was the most appropriate to the coming interview.

When everything was satisfactorily arranged she sat down at the piano.

“I'll be singing when he comes,” she thought. “What a blessing that 'Coals and Blanket' meeting of Aunt Sally's is!”

She sang a song of Grieg's, then one of Bizet's, then one of Tosti's.

He did not come, and the clock chimed five. She repeated the Grieg, which, on the whole, she preferred as

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an accompaniment to his *entrée*, but still he did not come.

Then she began the American ballad she had sung to Copley in the church, "I Love and the World is Mine."

But it was different now. She understood what it meant.

And the actress forgot herself in the artist, and the artist in the woman.

When the song was ended, she looked up with a start. Woodvil was beside her. "How you do sing!" he exclaimed.

She was flushed with pleasure in her own performance. "Do you know this?" she asked, without remembering to ask him to sit down.

When she had finished the queer

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little Hungarian ballad, she laughed at her own thoughtlessness.

“I am like a child when I am in the singing mood. Forgive me and take a comfy chair.”

He did so, and she took up her work. He leaned over and took one corner of it in his hand.

“Have you forgiven me, honor bright?”

“Forgive you? I had quite forgotten. Do *you* forgive *me*, now that you know, or—do you hate me?”

“Do I hate you? What is the use of asking me that?”

She knew she loved him and she knew he loved her, but she turned away and laughed.

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“ You might, you know,” she said. “ And it is very Christian-like of you not to. Ah! here’s the tea and I’m starving. At this hour, muffins appeal to one’s inward eye more than daffodils, don’t you think so ?”

She took her place behind the little silver-laden table and made the tea gracefully, with a charming little *hausfrau* air which she knew was becoming. When the last cup was drunk and just three muffins eaten, he asked her to sing again.

She sang a bolero of Bizet’s, but saw by his face that he did not like it. After a short modulation she began Bourdillon’s “ The Night has a Thousand Eyes,” and sang it exquisitely. When the last note died away

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she looked up and met his eyes.
But were those his eyes?

“That is true,” he said, hoarsely.
“The light of the whole world dies
when love is done.”

He turned, and leaning on the
mantel-piece looked into the flames.

A cold fear clutched at her throat.
“He is afraid of me,” she thought.
“I am to be punished that way.”

“Mr. Woodvil,” she said, “you
are thinking of your friend. If you
knew how bitterly I have regretted
that——” and she did not know that
she realized and regretted it *now* for
the first time.

He faced her, frowning impatiently
“I was not thinking of MacKenzie,”
he answered. “May I tell you some-

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thing, Miss Carmichael ? Something about myself?" His face was white.

Mary nodded dumbly ; she could not speak.

And then Lady Sally came bustling in, clamoring for tea.

Mary could have screamed with disappointment, but managed to present Mr. Woodvil to her aunt, and in a few minutes he left.

"So !" said Lady Sally when they were alone. "That is your Mr. Woodvil ! Very good-looking, but a little too broad for his height."

Miss Carmichael said nothing, but rushed up-stairs and locked herself into her room.

"He loves me," she said aloud.
"He loves me."

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She threw herself down by her bed and almost without knowing it, she prayed. When she rose her eyes were shining with tears.

“I even said ‘Now I lay me’!” she thought, half laughing at herself, “and ‘make me a good girl’!”

CHAPTER XIII

Miss Carmichael hears a Piece of News

“**G**OOD-MORNING, Mary, do you feel inclined for a drive?”

Lord Yarrow sat very erect in his dog-cart, pulling his cob back at an angle of forty-five degrees.

“Of course I do,” answered Miss Carmichael, who stood on the steps. “If you will promise not to let the horse sit down on me!”

“I promise. Run and put on——”

“My bonnet and shawl? I *know* you were going to say bonnet and

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shawl," she cried, laughingly, as she ran up-stairs.

Lord Yarrow was a wiry little man with red cheeks and intensely curly hair. When Miss Carmichael was a child she had called him "the thin Santa Claus."

After she had climbed up beside him she said, "I think you are a very giddy old gentleman to drive about in such a flash cart." She caught his arm as they turned on one wheel. "And with such a frivolous beast," she added.

The frivolous beast put down his head the moment they came out on the road, and commenced pounding along at a terrific rate.

"What do you think of him?" asked the old gentleman.

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“He is nice and smooth.”

“He pulls like the you know who.”

It was a beautiful day, very cold but sunny, the frozen road ringing like iron under the flying hoofs.

Mary's cheeks grew crimson, and she buried her hands deep in her muff.

“It was so dear of you to come for me,” she said, presently.

“It's better to have a little of you than none at all, Mary. I was always so sorry you and Barry didn't hit it off together.”

“But we do. I'm very fond of Barry,” she answered.

“Yes; but we both, Lady Yarrow and I, would have been very glad to have you for our daughter, Mary.”

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She laughed. "Barry wouldn't have me at any price."

"Come, come! You wouldn't have Barry," he answered.

"Seriously, he never gave me the chance," she said. "He disapproves of me in the bottom of his heart."

"Disapproves of you? Nonsense. He's not such an ass."

Mary looked funnily up at him out of the tail of her eye. "I don't like to call Barry an ass, you know, but I must insist that he disapproves of me. I know he does."

"Hm! he's a queer chap, Barry. I always had an idea you refused him."

Just here the horse took exception to an old woman, and tried to turn a

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somersault. When he was quiet again Lord Yarrow said, "By the way, I nearly forgot. Will you dine with us to-night, you and Lady Sally? We are giving a 'bore dinner,' and luckily two of the bores can't come. Will you excuse the late invitation?"

"We couldn't have excused an earlier one! But please explain whether we are merely substitutes or invited as a leaven?"

He laughed. "Don't fish, Mary! But you will come? I'll put you on my left hand if Lady Yarrow will let me."

"Of course we'll come. Don't we always?"

He looked at her slyly. "I'll send

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you to dinner with Woodvil again, if you like."

"Do," she answered, coolly, "he's awfully amusing. Is he going back to Brazil soon?"

"I don't know. He leaves us day after to-morrow, but I don't know his plans."

Miss Carmichael could hardly suppress a chuckle.

"I want to stop at the Ridge Farm," went on Lord Yarrow, turning up a steep, lumpy lane. "They have a black sheep that I want to buy for my flock."

"How many are there in your black flock now?" she asked.

"Seventeen. And I don't believe there's another in England. I'm

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going to have their wool made into cloth. I'll give you enough for a frock, if you'll promise to wear it."

"Of course I will. Some people will think it very appropriate!"

Lord Yarrow laughed. "A wolf in sheep's clothing!"

Mary bit her lip. She remembered her aunt's saying to her about young Copley, "Don't you be a wolf!" And she had been a wolf.

A tremendous jolt which nearly threw her out of the cart put an end to unpleasant thoughts, and the old man said, "But don't you go and captivate poor Woodvil, my dear; he's married, you know."

After a minute's silence, in which

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the world turned over, Mary answered, quietly,—

“ Is he ?”

“ Yes, poor fellow ! It’s a great pity. He married a Spanish girl or a Brazilian, the first year he went out. She left him after a year, and went back to her people. Barry says it was a good riddance. If he were not a papist, he could divorce her for desertion.”

“ How dreadful !” she said. “ And I didn’t know he was a Roman Catholic.”

“ Oh, yes. His mother was French.” They had reached the top of the lane and drove around to the kitchen-door of the old farmhouse.

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Mrs. Burton came out to them, her sleeves rolled up, a big apron on.

Mary admired the apron, it was so stiff and clean. And the "cow-licks" on the woman's temples also pleased her.

The house-door was open, and she could see into the roomy old kitchen with its big fireplace.

A cross-eyed maid was polishing the andirons, crouching down on the newly-washed floor. In a big rocking-chair, on a gay calico cushion, lay a great gray cat. "How can people like cats?" thought the girl, idly.

Then suddenly she remembered the cat of Sœur Françoise-Espérance, the door-keeper of her convent-school in Paris. Its name was Bon Espoir, and

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it had lost its tail. Everything was so quiet in the convent, the very birds in the walled garden sang gently, it seemed. And then the chapel. It was a pleasant religion. She had always liked the candles and the good-smelling incense. But she had wished the Madonnas in the pictures did not all look so like sheep.

Suddenly she heard a funny little cry, but did not know from whence it came until Lord Yarrow said, turning from his interesting parley about the black sheep, "What is it, my dear?"

"I—such a queer sudden pain in my chest," she stammered. "It is over now."

"Let me get you a glass of my

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currant wine, Miss Carmichael," said the farmer's wife.

Mary nodded, and drank the sweet stuff with fortitude, praising it warmly.

"So you'll send Burton to me, then," resumed Lord Yarrow, as Mary handed down the glass.

"Yes, my lord. Good-day, my lord; good-day, miss."

"I'll have that sheep," announced the old man, with satisfaction, as they plunged into the lane, and began to joggle down it.

"If this road were a river it would be a cataract," remarked Miss Carmichael, catching at his arm. "It is a good thing neither of us has false teeth."

She chattered on without ceasing, until they reached the house.

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“So you will come to-night?” he asked, as she climbed down.

“Of course. With pleasure. Good-by, and thanks so much. It was—bully!”

She pronounced the word with a little *air gamin* that amused him hugely.

“Good-by, you tomboy,” he answered.

CHAPTER XIV

*In which Miss Carmichael's Conscience
has a Hard Time of it*

AFTER luncheon Miss Carmichael ordered Abou Ben Adhem to be saddled, and went for a ride.

“Lor’, miss, you are looking lovely to-day,” said Burrows, as she fastened the veil and looked at her mistress in the glass.

Mary raised her heavy eyes. She *was* lovely. Her cheeks were a deep, glowing red, and her smouldering eyes as blue as the Bay of Naples in the sun.

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With a short laugh she gathered up her habit and ran down-stairs.

Putting her foot on the roomy palm of Mr. Samuel Riggs, she sprang into the saddle and was off.

“If I could only *meet* him,” she muttered, between set teeth, “I’d show him how little I care if he has *six* Spanish wives! How *dared* he!” She clenched her hand tight over the handle of her crop. “I’d like to strike him across the face till the blood came,” she thought, furiously. “The *beast*! O God, how I hate him!”

Sam, who was kept warm by no inward rage, shivered, and cuddled his feet close under his nag. “Cold as nails,” he observed, “and in course we’ll be out for hours.

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“But I’m glad it’s the style for grooms to ride *beyond*. It’s a pleasure to see her ride. I bet she’s strapped up tight; I could span her waist with one ‘and’!”

When they reached the road Miss Carmichael struck her horse, and galloped furiously on away from the village.

She nearly ran over a leisurely dog, and pulled up just in time to avoid knocking down an old man, who protested vividly. It did her good and cleared her brain to go so fast; she could think better.

“I’d like to kill him,” she thought, chewing her lips savagely. “I’d like to kill everybody. I hate the whole world. What a fool I was to think

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I'd be good! Bah!" she laughed aloud.

"I wish I could hurt him. I'd *like* to. I'd stop that laugh of his. And his horrible black eyes. O God, his eyes!" She turned into a lane between high, half-bare hedge-rows.

"So, Monsieur est Catholique! Bon. Et Madame sa Mère was French. Every one knows what Frenchwomen are! He probably inherits his delightful character. *Lâche!*"

She almost snarled the last word, one corner of her mouth drawing back over the eye-tooth. Just then she saw a horseman coming slowly along the lane towards her.

It was Jim Copley. He was lean-

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ing heavily forward, the bridle hanging loose on his horse's neck.

Mary Carmichael laughed. "No, there is no reason why that pug-nosed little fool should be happy while I am tortured this way," she said, half aloud.

She drew rein when they met. "'Oh, what can ail thee, Knight at Arms, alone and palely loitering'?" she cried.

"Turn and go with me. I am so bored by my own society that I'd soon have been forced to strike up a conversation with Riggs. Only I don't suppose he would have talked with me, he is so very *comme il faut*!"

"I—I must be going home," he said, hastily, not looking at her.

"If you won't turn and go with

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me, I must turn and go with you," she answered. "Consider Riggs's feelings!"

He raised his eyes and looked at her.

"Do come," she pleaded, cocking her head on one side. "I—want you."

He flushed and turned his horse. "You oughtn't to make me," he muttered, half sullenly, "and I oughtn't to come. But I can't help it."

"And why? Is there any law against your riding with me? Has Eve forbidden it?"

"No," he answered, shortly. "It—it is cold, isn't it?"

"Y—yes, it is very—cold," she mocked. "It isn't usually exactly balmy at the end of November."

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"It is cruel of you to make game of me," he exclaimed. "It is your fault that I am such an idiot."

"My fault!" She looked at him with widely innocent eyes.

"Yes, and you know it. You know I love you, and I am a dishonorable hound to tell you so. Are you satisfied now?" There was an ugly, bull-dog look about his mouth.

"Jim!" she said, softly.

He turned. "For God's sake, let me go. I am bad enough already. Think of Eve; she was your friend."

She turned her head until he could only see her ear. "It is not the first time a man has come between two

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women," she said, slowly. Then, before he could answer, she struck her horse and galloped ahead.

"I'll tell him to-night that I'm engaged," she thought suddenly, with a triumphant laugh. "Then he won't *dare* think I care."

Copley put his hand on her bridle. "Mary," he said, authoritatively, but with trembling lips, "tell me; if—I were free, could you—could you——?"

She drew herself up, and then looked down.

"I—Jim, you are *not* free. Let us not talk of impossibilities."

"Ah!" he cried. "Mary, I can't live without you. I—you—my God, I am a scoundrel!" With a groan he

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jerked his horse around and galloped back.

“I wonder what Mr. Graves ’ll say to *that?*” observed Sam to himself, with a grin. “Didn’t even tip his ’at!”

CHAPTER XV

In which Eve Rutherford is Reasonable

COIPLEY rode straight to Melton House without stopping.

Eve was sitting idle and alone in the firelit dusk. Her dark woollen gown was carefully turned up, showing a flounced red petticoat and her stout boots, which rested on the fender.

“What is it, Jim?” she asked, gently, as he entered.

He stood dumbly before her, nervously striking his muddy boots with his crop.

She rose and went to him. “You

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needn't be afraid to tell me, Jim dear.
Perhaps I know."

He threw himself into a big chair,
and hid his face in the back of it.

Eve pressed her plump, reddish
little hands hard together for a minute.
Then she touched his shoulder. "Is,
it Mary?" she asked.

"I am a scoundrel, Eve," he cried,
turning and facing her, his eyes wet.
"I don't understand myself."

"I know. I understand."

"What a cad I am!" he cried,
suddenly, rising. "It's a pity you
haven't a brother to horsewhip me.
Do you despise me?"

"No," she answered, quietly.
"Why should I despise my old friend,
who was my old friend long before

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he was—anything else? And you are *not* a scoundrel, Jim—I know you!"

She sat down again and folded her hands in her lap. The diamond in her engagement ring sparkled in the firelight, and she turned it inside her finger.

"Evey," he said, "I told you the truth when I said I didn't understand. I used to be a decent enough chap, and now—if you only knew how I loathe myself!"

She shook her head. "Don't exaggerate, Jim. Let us be reasonable. You know I am a prosaic little thing. Mary Carmichael herself always called me that. I'm not a bit tragic. If you are happy, I shall be—satisfied.

"Here is your ring." She took it

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off and handed it to him with a shaky little laugh.

“ You mustn’t pity me,” she went on, as he took the ring mechanically and put it in his pocket. “ I never was romantic, and we’ll just begin over to be friends.”

He buried his face in his hands and groaned. “ You are a saint,” he said, huskily.

“ Indeed I’m not. But it is better to be reasonable. *Don’t*, Jim dear.”

He wiped his eyes hastily with the back of his hand, after the manner in use before the introduction of handkerchiefs.

“ I must be off. God bless you, Evey.”

“ God bless you, Jim.”

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And he stumbled out of the room.

“Eve, are you there?”

It was Mrs. Rutherford, who entered a few minutes later.

“Yes, grandmamma.”

The old lady advanced to the fire.

“You are crying, dear?”

“Yes, grandmamma; but——”

Eve wiped her eyes and blew her nose. “But please don’t ask me why. I’ll tell you to-morrow. I don’t want to cry. I want to be reasonable.”

CHAPTER XVI

“The Night has a Thousand Eyes”

MISS CARMICHAEL sailed into Lady Yarrow's drawing-room that evening as queens ought to sail and don't.

Woodvil, who was talking with a young lady whose frame suggested the thought that if she were a chair no one would care to sit on her, started, and felt instinctively for the moustache he had left in Rio Janeiro.

Miss Carmichael was very beautiful in white satin, with a half-blown white rose artlessly stuck in her high-piled

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dark hair, and a splendid deep color in her cheeks.

It was already late, and Woodvil, who had his instructions, offered her his arm at once, while the butler announced dinner.

“How delightful that you are to take me in!” she said, confidentially. “I had horrid visions of old Mr. Cayley.”

She was much too clever to neglect him during dinner, talking to him rather more than to her other neighbor.

Once she even reproached Woodvil for neglecting *her*.

“It is very unkind of you to devote yourself so entirely to Mrs. Gates,” she whispered. “Mr. Featherly is anything but amusing.”

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He looked at her gravely.

“I am not feeling exactly amusing, myself, Miss Carmichael,” he answered.

“I hope you have no bad news?” her voice and eyes were full of friendly sympathy.

“Thanks. I have no bad news.”

Then he turned again to Mrs. Gates.

As he finished his grapes he said: “Miss Carmichael, may I come and talk to you after dinner?”

Miss Carmichael smiled serenely at him. “Of course you may! Indeed, if you do not, I shall be very much hurt. When I really *like* people I don’t like to have them neglect me.”

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He bit his lip. "Do you like me?"

Fixing her eyes firmly on a silver bowl on the sideboard, she answered, "It is very trying to be forced into a declaration, and I'd hate to have you think me forward; but—" suddenly facing him, and ending with a fine show of frank bonhomie—"I don't often like people, Mr. Woodvil, and I *do* like you!"

It was cleverly done, and she knew it.

Woodvil, who never thought it worth while to dissemble, merely bowed, and after a serious, puzzled glance, which pleased her very much, turned again to Mrs. Gates.

After dinner Miss Carmichael sat

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down by Mrs. Eaves, the rector's wife.

“The rectoress” had a long, drooping nose with a wart on it. On the wart grew a hair. From Mary's earliest childhood that hair had had a charm for her, and now she found herself adapting it to the metre of “The Wild Man of Borneo.”

“Rectoress on the sofa, nose on the rectoress, wart on the nose, hair on the wart.”

Mrs. Eaves talked comfortably on and then the clock struck ten and the men came in.

Mary watched them lazily. First the rector and Sir George Pegram, who looked like a pug-dog, but plumed himself on his resemblance to

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Lord Randolph Churchill. Then Mr. Featherly, whose neck was so long that he looked as if he were about to crow. Then Woodvil.

Mary sat quietly in her corner until Lady Yarrow asked her to sing.

She sang the Bolero of Bizet's, which Woodvil did not like.

“She sings almost *too* well,” whispered Mrs. Gates to Miss Margaretta Cayley, who warbled Claribel's ditties in a voice which was still called sweet from force of habit. “It is nearly like a professional.”

Miss Carmichael left the piano and sat down on the little sofa on which Woodvil had told her the story of his friend MacKenzie, a week ago.

Woodvil joined her at once. “Be-

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fore you go, will you sing 'The Night has a Thousand Eyes ?'" he asked.

"With pleasure. Do you like it ?" She opened her fan and began to fan herself slowly.

"I like it and—it will take away the taste of Carmen."

She raised her eyebrows. "It wasn't Carmen."

"It was the same thing. Miss Carmichael, I am going away to-morrow."

His voice, which was ordinarily pitched in E, fell to C, so to speak.

"I know; Lord Yarrow told me. Are you going back to that dreadful Brazil ?"

Crash! Some one began The Hammerstein Sonata. They will

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both hear it with a shiver, to the end of their days.

“I sail on Tuesday. Mary,” he began, grasping his black silk ankle firmly, “you are playing a part to-night, and playing it well. But I can’t bear to leave you like this. I love you, dear.”

Lady Sally, who was sitting near, watched them curiously.

Miss Carmichael could not speak, but she managed to laugh. “I’d like to *kill* Aunt Sally,” she thought, and she meant it. After a minute she said, “I understand your wife is Spanish, Mr. Woodvil?”

He flushed. “Yes. I tried to tell you the other day as soon—as I knew. I am not a scoundrel.”

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“How well Mrs. Seaton plays!”

Woodvil looked her straight in the face. “Don’t be too hard on me. You’ll never see me again, Mary dear!”

Her eyes wandering idly around the room, Mary Carmichael answered,

“Forgive me. I love you, Jacques Woodvil, and—I hate to suffer.”

He took her fan and bent over it to hide his face.

“God bless you for telling me,” he said.

Mary smiled at her aunt. “If he only would ask me to run away with him,” she thought, frantically.

But he didn’t, and she wouldn’t have gone if he had.

Lord Yarrow, who stood near Lady

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Sally, rushed across the room almost before the last chord of that always-to-be-remembered sonata had ended. “Now, Mary! I can’t stand any more of *that*. Sing something.”

And Mary sang “The Night has a Thousand Eyes.”

There was a beautiful tenderness in her voice that had never been there before, and only Woodvil knew why.

When she rose she went at once to her aunt. “I’m going home, I have a headache,” she announced, and Lady Sally nodded.

“I’ll come too.”

Mary said good-night to all, and, at the door, to Woodvil.

“Good-by,” he said. “God bless you.”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

And under twenty odd eyes, Miss Carmichael bid adieu to the man she loved.

“Good-by. Remember, I will always love you as long as I live. God has treated us cruelly.”

CHAPTER XVII

Sweet are the Uses of Adversity

THE next afternoon Mrs. Rutherford was drinking a sad cup of tea, alone with her cat.

Eve was in bed with one of those headaches which even the most reasonable of girls must indulge in sometimes.

Slow, heavy tears slid painfully down the old lady's brown cheeks, but she did not brush them away, and she forgot to put sugar in her tea.

Suddenly the door opened, and Mary Carmichael came in.

“Mary, child, what is it?” cried

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Mrs. Rutherford, forgetting her own trouble at the sight of the girl's wan face.

“It is Retribution with a big R, Mrs. Rutherford. Where is Eve?”

“She is—not well. She and Jamie——”

“I know,” interrupted Mary, taking off her jacket. “I have come to straighten things out. In a week it will be all right again. No, no tea, please.”

The old lady looked at her anxiously. “What is it, Mary? You——”

“Oh *me!*” Miss Carmichael laughed. “I’m just being paid back for all my sins, and God has the upper hand.”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

“Hush! Now tell me, dear. You have no mother.”

The girl's mouth trembled.

“It is that I love some one, and he is married. And he will never come back. It was Jacques Woodvil. Was? It *is*, and it always will be. He's gone to Brazil, and—that's all. Now about Eve. Where is that idiot of a Jim Copley? I sent him a note, but he wrote back refusing to come and see me.”

“Poor lad, he is ashamed,” said the old lady, softly.

“I *must* see him. Won't you send for him and let me see him here?”

Mrs. Rutherford hesitated. “What could you do?” she asked.

“I can make it all right,” cried

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Miss Carmichael, jumping from her chair with nervous haste, and pacing up and down. "Oh, don't be afraid. I know myself, and I can. And I *must*, too," she added, twisting her hands together.

"Don't you see that I must do something for somebody, or I'll go mad?"

The old lady seated herself at her little desk, and wrote a note without speaking. Then she rang, sent the note, and went up to Miss Carmichael.

"My dear bonnie Mary," she said, taking the girl's face in her hands. "My dearie."

Mary kissed her hurriedly, and then going to the piano began to play waltzes as fast as she could, and Mrs.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Rutherford, who understood things, went back to the fire.

In about half an hour Copley came in. He started back when he saw Mary, who still sat at the piano, but she rose at once, and said authoritatively,—

“Wait! I want to tell you something.” Then she went on: “Yesterday I made you think—you know. Well, it was all a lie. I don’t care a ha’penny for you. I love some one else, and I thought he didn’t love me.”

She paused, and then, speaking very slowly, went on, holding up her hand to prevent his interrupting her.

“I did that yesterday because I was in a rage with the whole world. Do you understand? I wanted to be re-

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

venged,—to hurt *some* one, and—you came.” Copley turned away. “Do you understand?” went on the girl. “You thought you loved me, but you didn’t.

“It was always Eve. Eve never did anything bad in her life, and I’ve hardly ever done anything good. I amused myself with you because there was no one else. Do you see?”

She made no attempt at softening the cruel truths.

“Now I’m punished. Jacques Woodvil went away this morning, and I’ll never see him again. So you see,—don’t make love to me. I’m not worth it, and I love some one else.”

“Mary, Mary,” cried Mrs. Rutherford.

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Miss Carmichael turned to her, her eyes black with tears. "Dear, I have done my best," she said.

Copley left the window. "Good-by," he said, abruptly, and left the room without another word.

Then Mary Carmichael burst out crying, and Mrs. Rutherford took the girl's head on her breast and kissed her.

"My Mary," she murmured, "my brave Mary."

After a few minutes Miss Carmichael looked up. "Dear me! wasn't I tragic?" she said, with a little laugh.

"And my nose is so swollen that I can't see past it."

CHAPTER XVIII

*In which Mr. Copley expresses his
Opinion*

“JIM! Guess the news!”

“I’m sure I can’t, Eve. I never *can*, you know,” answered Mr. Copley, placidly, cutting an iced fig in two.

The month is June; the place, Venice.

“Well, Mary Carmichael is going to marry Lord Borrowdaile.”

Copley changed color. “Borrowdaile? By Jove!”

“Yes. Grandmamma seems very

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

much pleased. I can't understand it, though,—a cripple!"

"He's a good sort," murmured Copley.

"But *Mary Carmichael*. However,—he's awfully rich."

Copley poured out a glass of wine, and drank it in a silence broken only by the chattering of the gondoliers beneath their balcony.

"I tell you what I think, Eve," he said, slowly, setting down his glass.

"I think that Miss Carmichael is a much better woman than most people know."

"Why, Jim dear?"

Eve knew nothing of the scene in her grandmother's drawing-room, and

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Copley had no idea of betraying what he considered a secret.

“Well,” he answered, “I *do*. I was an awful ass as well as an awful beast, dear, and she jolly well sat on me and made me ashamed of myself. I might have been drivelling about her to this day if she hadn’t shown me—well, that it was really *you* all the time. And we are happy, aren’t we, dear ?”

Eve nodded. “Yes, we are, dear old boy.”

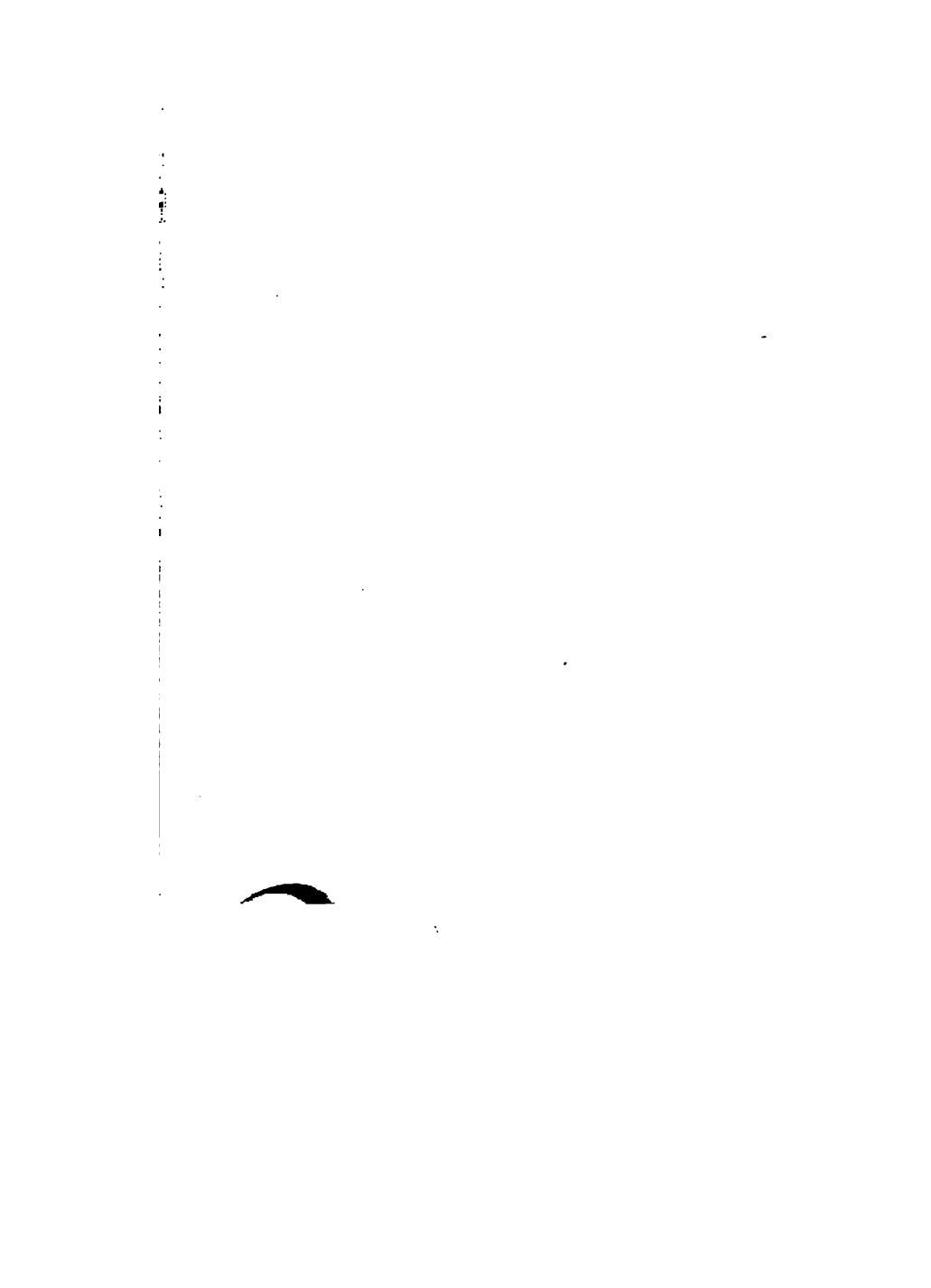
“And then—well,” finished her husband, decidedly, “I like her, Eve, and I hope she’ll be very happy. And I don’t believe she’s going to marry Borrowdaile for his money.”

“But do you think she *loves* him ?”

Miss Carmichael's Conscience

Jim Copley had had enough of the subject. "Well,—*love* him,—I don't know," he said, rising, "but I don't believe she's marrying him for his money."

THE END.



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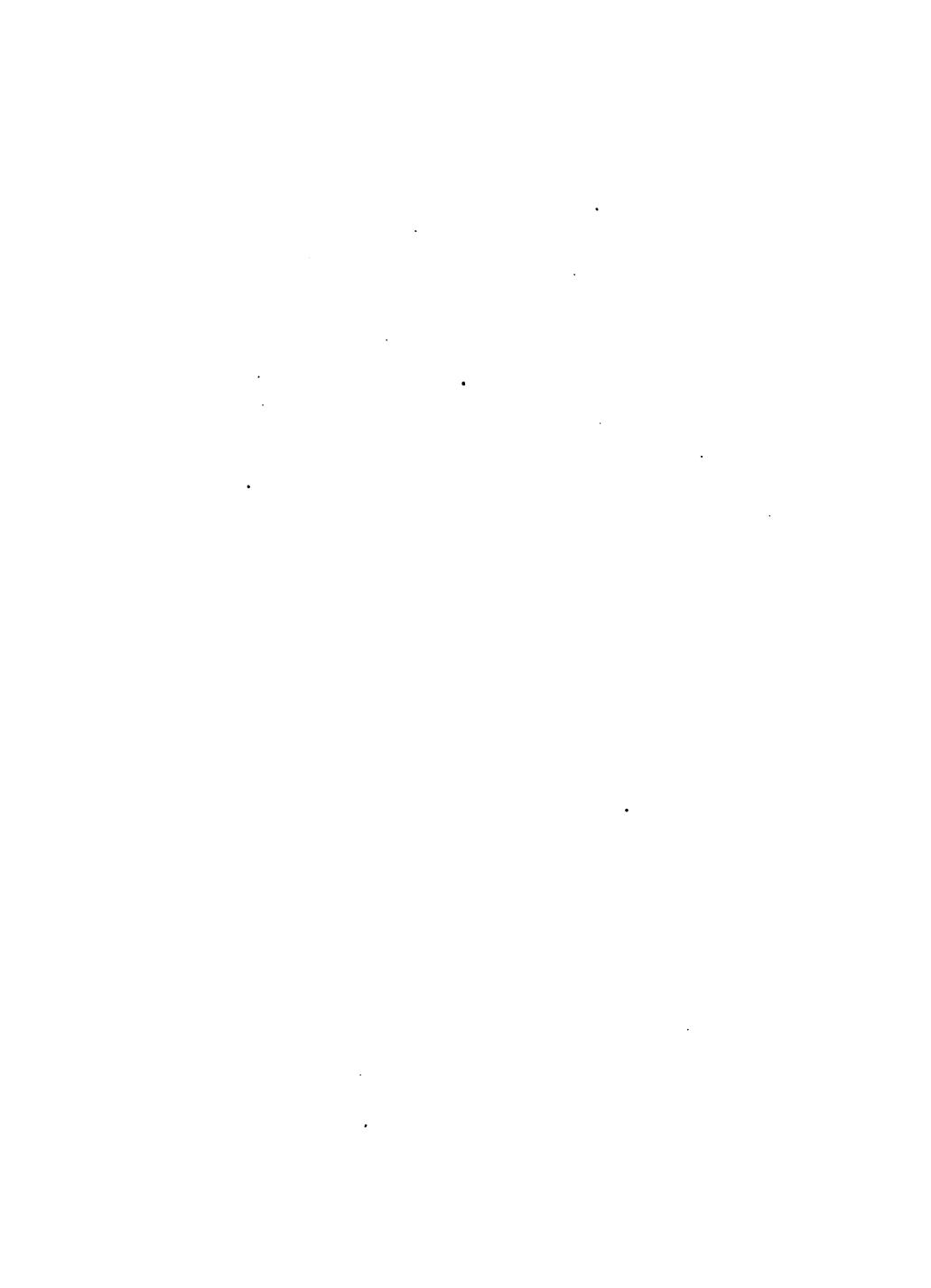
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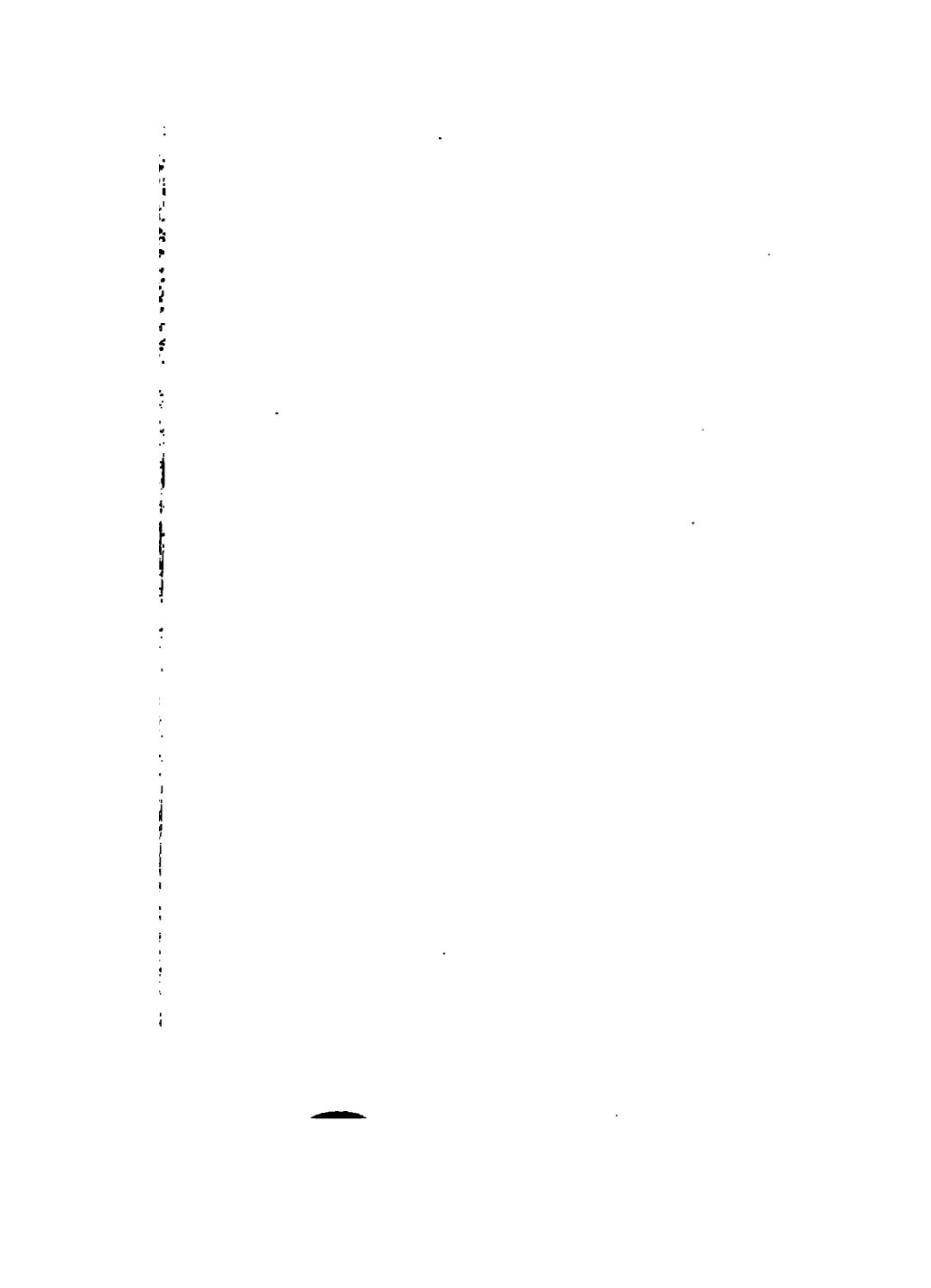


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